

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL
CENTER FOR LOWELL HISTORY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**THE WORKING PEOPLE OF LOWELL
LOWELL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
MARY BLEWETT/MARTHA MAYO**

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INTERVIEWER: SUZETTE JEFFERSON
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**S = SUZETTE
J = JOSEPH**

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S: Okay, I guess the first thing we want to do is um, maybe if you could tell me where your parents, and grandparents came from, and where they were born, and why they came?

J: Poland.

S: Poland? And why did they come to this country?

J: (Laughing) Why does anybody come to this country?

S: For jobs?

J: Looking for something better, a way of life, you know.

S: Yah, there was persecution and all that?

J: Yah, sure!

S: Yah. Now who came here, your grandparents or your parents came from Poland?

J: My parents. My grandparents never came here.

S: They never came over?

J: No, no.

S: Okay. And how old were your parents when they came over?

J: Oh maybe ah, oh, I'm trying to think, maybe eighteen, something like that.

S: Were they married when they came over, or did they marry....?

J: No, no, no, they married in this country.

S: So they came over separately?

J: Oh yah.

S: Oh, they met here. Okay, and when they came to this country, where did they come from... where did they go to?

J: Oh, my father landed in Galveston, Texas. Then he went to St. Louie, Missouri.

S: Umhm.

J: Then he went to Pennsylvania.

S: Now did he have a special occupation?

J: No, he didn't. (S: He just...) Now here's an immigrant that couldn't speak. That's why, you know, when you look back, and they're giving all these new immigrants everything, throwing it at him, (S: umhm) who couldn't speak. He landed in Galveston, Texas. He went to St. Louie, Missouri, he worked those places. (S: Yah) He went to Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, and he came to Clinton, I think, Mass. (Massachusetts).

S: And when he worked in those kind of places, do you know what kind of work that he did, or just whatever was available?

J: Whatever was available I think. Mostly he worked in the steel mill I think, in Pittsburg, you know. In Galveston, I think he was working at the farm, some farm area there. And then when he came to Clinton he worked in textile, in the cotton mill.

S: So that's how he moved to Lowell?

J: No, from Lowell we moved to New Market, New Hampshire in 1930 like. And then we moved...when the mill moved, the New Market Manufacturing moved to Lowell, which was the old silk mill at the time, on Market Street, where the headquarters of the National Park is and all that. And ah, that was the Lowell Silk Mill, but it was owned by New Market Manufacturing. When they moved there from New Market, we moved down with them. That was maybe thirty one, thirty two. And that's where we worked, in the New Market Manufacturing. And in between, after that, I worked in the Pacific Mills

and the Woolen Mill in Lawrence for awhile. And when they got slack, I came back to Lowell, went back to work in the Silk Mill. And from there to the Boott Mill. From the Boott Mill to Wannalancit Textile. Oh, in between I did go back to Clinton to work in the doll factory there for about a year, and then I came back to Lowell and worked in the... Well the last place I worked was the Wannalancit Textile, from say like thirty six till fifty three. Then I went to work for the state, correction officer, and I retired from that Department of Correction.

S: Do you know what year your parents come over from Poland?

J: I would say like somewhere around 1905 or between 1905 and 1909, something like that. I don't remember exactly.

S: What part of Poland did they come from?

J: That's a hard question. I forget. They often said it, but I never paid too much attention to it, you know. I can tell you like [names a place in Polish], that's just the villages, you know. (S: umhm) So I couldn't truthfully say the exact area.

S: Well what did they tell you about life in Poland. How was it like?

J: Terrible! (S: Yah) Miserable! [J: Laughs]

S: Well, in what ways? I mean... ?

J: Well you know, the Russians took everything they had ...

S: Yah.

J: See, if you were raising anything, the Russians took it. (S: umhm)
Well you know the conditions now, and at that time it was even worse. (S: Yah)
You couldn't even ah... they wouldn't let them ah, go to school to learn, or read, or write. They did it, you know, undercover if they could. And if they raised any livestock or anything out in the fields, well the Russians took most of it. They didn't leave them much to look forward to.

S: So why didn't the grandparents go with them?

J: Well I think they were fortunate enough to be able to come themselves.

S: Right.

J: You know, and see if they could make out.

S: I'm wondering how your father escaped, being conscripted into the Russian army, or Polish army?

J: Well ah ... the time he left, like I said, maybe 1905, and he was like, just about eighteen, (S: umhm) you know.

S: So they let him go?

J: Well I don't know how...they just got here. I don't know whether they let him go, or they just managed to escape, or what, but they did manage to get here.

S: Did he tell you how he came over? I mean how he came to this country? Like across Europe, did he come on some sort of special train, or did he go on a ship from some port?

J: Hmm...they came on a ship you know, from Poland then.

S: Oh, right from Poland then, on a ship. Was it crowded?

J: Oh yah, because there was others that were leaving there too, you know.

S: Hm.

J: Well his brothers came too.

S: Umhm. Oh, how many came together?

J: Well, that I know of, two brothers he had in this country. They all came together, but they all went different ways, you know.

S: Umhm, umhm.

J: So and they all settled in different areas.

S: So they all came over. Do you know how much they paid for their fare on the boat, how much it cost them, or anything?

J: No, I really don't. That's something I never asked them.

S: So they went to immigration in Galveston, Texas?

J: He went, my father went to Galveston, yah.

S: Now why did he pick that particular place to go to?

J: Probably because that was the only place available at the time.

S: That was...the boat was going to... (J: Yah) Huh, strange. And once your father was here, did he ever think of earning enough money to send for his parents do you think?

J: Well, money at that time was almost worthless. He probably had something like that in mind, but it never came to actually going through with it, because they probably were making enough just to survive at the time, you know, get by themselves.

S: So when was the last you heard of your grandparents? I mean...

J: Well they use to write to them. They were fortunate enough to be able to pick up some ah, a little reading and writing. They use to write to Poland every so often to the family there, (S: Umhm) and ah, that was back maybe in the... The last time they probably wrote was in the sixties or seventies, but in between that time they use to write back and forth to one another.

S: So your grandparents were stuck in the wars and so forth, in Europe?

J: Oh yah, well.... And there was some other brothers and sisters that were left there.

S: They were still there too?

J: Umhm.

S: That must have been hard on your father to hear about them being ... ?

J: Well, it wasn't easy you know.

S: Yah. So what about your Mom now, she came from the same area of Poland that your Dad did?

J: Ah, yah, in the general vicinity, yah.

S: Umhm, and she came in about the same time that he did?

J: I think she came a little later. Yah, she came up maybe in like ah... 1910, something like that.

S: And where did she go to?

J: That... I really don't know whether she came to Pennsylvania first, and then worked her way down to Clinton, or whether she got into New York and came down to this area, you know.

S: Did she have the skill, like as a weaver, or some sort of ... ?

J: No, no they had no skill, but they lived on a farm. They were peasants you know. (S: umhm) But they were fortunate that they had a piece of land that they could work in Poland.

S: So your saying any skills they picked up, they learned here?

J: Everything, yes.

S: Okay. So where did your Mom and Dad meet?

J: In Clinton.

S: In Clinton?

J: Umhm.

S: And do you know how they met? Like did they meet through the church, or through...?

J: Well, more or less you know, through families, you know.

S: Okay.

J: Communications through families.

S: So there was like a Polish community and they all met each other.

J: Oh yah, yah. They would talk to one another, and then they got together and that was it. (S: Hm) They married.

S: So they were married in Clinton? (J: Hm) And that's where you were born, in Clinton? (J: Right) Okay. And how long did you live in Clinton for? Until what age? (J: Me?) Yah. (J: Oh, fifteen) Till you were fifteen. (J: Umhm) Now did you go to school in Clinton? (J: Yah) Until?

J: First year of high I completed.

S: Ah huh. And why did you stop school?

J: Why? You had to go to work to help the family. There was....

S: Because this was what, about depression time?

J: Oh sure.

S: Pretty close to it.

J: Sure, sure.

S: Ya.

J: Depression, in how.

S: Yah.

J: Sure there was six, five others in the family besides me. So you had to go to work to help the family, you know. (S: Umhm) And ah, that was it. Like you didn't make any money in those days. If you made... you went to work, well in the mill, well when you worked in the silk mill, course I'm not saying anybody made it, you know, you were lucky to get ten dollars a week, sometimes five. And that was maybe for fifty four hours, sixty hours a week.

S: And that was when you were fifteen?

J: Fifteen.

S: What did you do as your first job?

J: Ah, my first job? I was cleaning bobbins.

S: Oh.

J: They'd put the spinner bobbin of wood and then thread wound around it .

S: Umhm.

J: So we, they send it to the weave room, and that's where they weave the cloth, with whatever is left. They send it to be cleaned so they can refill the bobbin.

S: Oh I see.

J: And then I went to work on the crepe twisters. That was a machine that turned rayon into crepe. You put a spool of rayon, and the fly on it would spin. And the cloth worked back and forth, when that fly that's spinning, (S: umhm) the yarn is on there, so that turns it to crepe.

S: Now what do they use that crepe for?

J: Cloth, crepe cloth.

S: I'm just thinking about your job as a bobbin boy. How much an hour did you get for that job?

J: You made ... you worked by how many cases. You had a case.

S: Oh, by piece work?

J: Yah.

S: Oh.

J: Well maybe twenty cents. Well when I came to Lowell I was still doing that, and ah, we were getting twenty cents a case, which was maybe three feet long, and two feet wide, and a two feet high. So if you filled one of those up, you got twenty cents.

S: How long did it take you to do that?

J: Well one week we made twelve dollars, and they came over and told us they had to give us a cut, because we were making more than the bosses and the weavers. [Both laugh] So we used to be able to do maybe ten cases a day, twelve depending on the type of yarn was on the bobbins, and how much of it was on there. We worked in pairs. One would feed the belt, it would spin along and put it up. The other one would take the yarn and put it on a wheel that spun around. And sometimes the thread would get caught and the bobbin would fly off.

S: Hum. Anybody ever get hurt when that happened?

J: Well you got hit, sure at times, of course.

S: What were the conditions like in the mill?

J: Well they weren't you know, you had to work to make a nickel, I hope.

S: No, but I mean, was it noisy, or dirty, or clean?

J: Oh sure it was noisy, of course it was noisy. With the machines running and ah... Well they weren't exactly immaculate, but they weren't that bad, you know, as far as cleanliness goes. They used to have sweepers going around and sweeping all the time. (S: Umhm) So, there were times, they were dirty at the time, but they try to keep it half way decent I'd say. And different areas were harder to keep clean than others.

S: Right. Now this was Clinton. What was the name of the place in Clinton that you worked at?

J: No, this was in New Market. I never worked in a mill in Clinton.

S: Oh, you didn't.

J: No, this was in New Market, and in Lowell.

S: Oh now what was the mill in New Market called?

J: It was the New Market Manufacturing Company.

S: Okay.

J: Yah, and the only one in Lowell was originally Lowell Silk Mill, but then they renamed it New Market Manufacturing Company. And the mills that was on Clinton was the Lancaster Mill, that was the cotton mill. My mother and father worked there.

S: Now they both worked while you were growing up?

J: Oh yah, yah.

S: So who took care of the kids?

J: The kids took care of the kids, and the kids took care of the... They went to work in the morning at 7:00, and the kids that were old enough, like myself, my sister, they took care of the younger ones. Went to school, came back, start the wood and fire so they could get the dinner ready. They use to come for dinner at 12:00. And they lived in the company houses, and the mill was just up the street a couple of minutes walk. And then supper was the same way. You'd come from school and start getting your supper ready.

S: Okay. So the kids help make dinner?

J: Oh sure, sure. You'd have to peel potatoes and wash them out, and you know, get the stove ready, start the fire. It was all wood stove, it wasn't nothing electric or gas at that time.

S: Well when your mother had small babies at home, did she still work then?

J: Well after she was well enough, yah she would.

S: So ...

J: The neighbors, who ever was ...

S: Would watch the small children.

J: Yah sure, because it wasn't like living today. I'm living in this house, my neighbors living in there. In Clinton the houses were altogether, (S: umhm) they're in blocks. People were more or less like a family, they helped one another. They'd come in and see if you needed any help, and they'd give you a hand.

S: Now, this is a company house you lived in?

J: Right!

S: And so did your father have to pay any rent?

J: Oh yah. They took it out of the pay every week, like a dollar and a half a week, or two dollars a week.

S: That's not bad.

J: Oh yah! [Both laughing] Yah , but when you made like ten dollars a week, or twelve dollars a week...

S: Well what was company housing like? Was it okay?

J: Oh it was good and clean, because you had free electric, and they had steam heat, (S: Yah) which was tied in with the company's boiler room. (S: Yah) so ...

S: And who made the repairs on the house when it needed it?

J: The company did.

S: The company did.

J: If there was any.

S: So that wasn't too bad?

J: No ah, they tried to keep the houses up pretty good.

S: Did your Dad have to be on a waiting list before he got into company housing, or...?

J: I don't remember now, because ah...

S: You were young.

J: All I remember is where we lived in Clinton, the houses, then from where we moved. But everybody there like I say, the whole street was... like we lived on Green Street, the Lancaster Mills was on, and everybody on the street practically, I'd say 90 percent of them were Polish. There's a few other nationalities that lived there too, but most of it was Polish right from the top of the street to the end.

S: So you think that's why your father ended up in Clinton, is because [words unclear].

J: Well his brother said to come down because you could get a job and it was pretty good. So that's why he went.

S: So his brother was working in the mills too?

J: Yah, his brother worked. Then his brother bought a farm in Boylston, (S: umhm) and the other one went to Rhode Island, that's where he stayed. And the other one was on the farm in Boylston, Mass. My father stayed in the mill.

S: What about the house, the company house like ah ... did it have an upstairs and a downstairs?

J: Depend where you lived. Some of them did, and some didn't. See, some...First place I remember we lived in a block. There was twenty four families in it. They had four different entrances in them, they had four. (S: Umhm) There were six families living in one entrance, three on one side, three on the other. The bottom floor, two families, two on second floor, two on the third floor. And there were some blocks across the street from us which had upstairs and downstairs. And there was another block had the same thing, but there was only like ten...ten tenements in that block, but each one had up and down. And then they had some four family houses, which were up and down also. There was no single tenement houses, (S: nothing single) of the company's. There was two tenement houses in the more exclusive housing that they had. And ah, that was it. Course there's other people lived there, but they lived outside of the company houses. Everybody didn't live in the company houses.

S: So that house that you lived in, did that have an upstairs and a down, or were you just one floor?

J: We had one floor first, the first place, then we moved further down the street, it was up and down.

S: Umhm.

J: But you didn't have a room for each individual. There may be six children, and you might have a tenement with four, three rooms.

S: Oh, so you had how many bedrooms?

J: Oh, two bedrooms.

S: One for the parents, and one for the kids! [Laughs]

J: Yah sure. You just put beds, and you probably slept two or three to a bed.

S: And then what was the other room, just like a living room and kitchen and [unclear]?

J: There was a kitchen and two bedrooms and a pantry, in the first place we lived in. Then we moved further down the street there was, well it was supposed to be a living room, but it was a bedroom actually. There was a bedroom downstairs, and two bedrooms upstairs, and a bathroom upstairs, pantry.

S: And you had...at that time you had indoor plumbing by then?

J: But first there wasn't. You had out houses in the back.

S: Yah, rough in the wintertime.

J: Oh yah, yah, but eventually they did have plumbing inside.

S: Well now if you had a six tenement house, and you had out houses in the back, how many out houses did they have to accommodate?

J: They had sheds, they were sheds there.

S: Several of them or...?

J: Oh yah, there wasn't just one out house. It was built like a shed, and they had so many in there.

S: Oh, okay. And then when did they... like the second house you lived in, they had indoor?

J: Oh yah, oh they changed the others back to indoor plumbing later on, but from the beginning you had the out houses. But ah, when we moved the other place they had indoor plumbing. They already had indoor plumbing, changed over to indoor plumbing in the one we first lived in though.

S: And when you say indoor plumbing, did you have hot water?

J: Are you kidding? [Giggles] The hot water, you had a hot water tank, a copper tank... (S: Umhm) maybe thirty, forty gallons, and that's how you got your hot water. And you probably got it, used it maybe, well during the weekend. And other than that, like if you had to wash clothes, you'd have to use it in a big copper kettle on the stove and heat it, and turn the clothes with a stick. And then you had a stone face soap sinks, and you used a scrub board, wash it out, rinse it in there, then rinse it again.

S: Now what about bath tubs? Did you have bath tubs at that point, or did you just use like a tub in the kitchen.?

J: Nope, there was a bath tub, and they had bath tubs. Originally they didn't, but after they put them in. There was a bath tub, but you had to heat the water. Like I say, you only heated that water once a week probably, and that was in the copper ah... tank, but you had to polish that tank every, every weekend.

S: Why did you have to polish it?

J: Well you have to polish. The house had to be gone over with spic and span every weekend, wash the floors, (S: This is per order of your mother) clean the stove, polish the faucets on the sink.

S: Now were you ah ...

J: Those were wooden floors, you know.

S: Wow! Because you were a boy, did you have to do just what they term masculine chores, or did you help your mom do the wash and things like that too?

J: Well, more or less, she did most of it, but we helped her.

S: Yah, everybody just pitched in.

J: Everybody did their little bit, you know. As you were older and you were able to do it, you helped. Oh, you had to cut wood for the stove.

S: You had a wood and coal?

J: Oh yah, wood stove.

S: And that's what heated your ... ?

J: Well, you cooked on it. (S: Umhm) You see how it's hot in the summer, can you imagine cooking on a wooden stove in the kitchen, (S: No, giggles) for your meals.
[Laughs]

S: And what did you use for heat, the wood stove too?

J: Well the company houses had steam heat that was coming in from the company boiler room.

S: Oh, okay.

J: They installed steam heat in all of their, in the houses, (S: Umhm) in the company houses, but before they installed it, the stove was the main source of heat.

S: What about light? Did you have alot of windows in those tenements?

J: Oh yah, there was enough windows. Each room had a couple of windows, one in the kitchen, one in the bathroom, one in the pantry.

S: And you said there was what, how many kids in your family?

J: Six, seven, one died, but there were six that were living.

S: And you all shared one bedroom?

S: Well they weren't all there at that time. At the time we were there, there was only four of us, and the other two added on.

S: Oh, so what did you have like bunk beds or one big bed, or ... ?

J: Big beds, one big bed. See, but there was three boys and two girls, they slept in one bed, and the boys slept in the other. That was the way of life then.

S: Yah. What do you remember about ah, your house as far as social gathering goes? Where did everybody get together in your house, in the kitchen?

J: Oh yah, kitchen, or the folk's bedroom, whenever there was room. If there was a big... Sometimes everybody would get together in one house, and well there wasn't enough room in the kitchen. So they went in the bedroom, and they sat where ever they could. (S: Hum) They use to visit one another in the block, everybody. They lived next door, like this door to the other door, and that's... they came in and out. It was like open house. You never thought of locking the door with a key.

S: No! You didn't have to, huh?

J: No. In the summer they use to sit out front. There used to be a little piece of ground there, they planted flowers in front of the house, and they used to sit out there and talk. And the men would go up on the hill and play cards after supper.

S: And the women would stay home and talk?

J: Ya, well they'd sit out front, in the front of the house.

S: Umhm. Did you have... your mom have a special ah, days that she cooked special dishes, or did the have a special day when she baked?

J: Well if she baked, she baked usually on the weekend. You know, like Friday night, that was a big shopping night. You'd go downtown and pick up whatever you needed for the weekend.

S: Umhm.

J: And they used to bake bread. There was nothing... They never used to bake fancy pastry or anything like that. They made pies, apple pies, in the summer blueberry pies, or something like that, but that was... They didn't have time to bake actually. They worked...if they worked in the mill when would they do it?

S: Yah, I know. Well what about... did she... What was your favorite dish that she cooked? (Both laughing)

J: Cabbage and potatoes. [Laughing]

S: Cabbage and potatoes?

J: Oh sure, everybody had that. That's what they use to do in the winter. For the winter they used to have a big wooden barrel like that, they used to buy the cabbage from the farmers that would come down the street. They use to come down with a big wagon, and it was loaded with cabbage. You'd buy maybe five, six, seven bushels of cabbage, and they used to take turns going from one house to the other, and shred it. (S: Ah huh) And they'd have this heavy wooden poker, and they'd poke that down and make sauerkraut out of it. (S: Hm) Throw some cabbage, and salt, and vinegar, and pound it, and they use to put in heads of cabbage in there. So if they want to make, I don't know what they call (galumpky?), you know, cabbage leaves stuffed with hamburg and rice, they'd have it. And they use to get maybe ten bushels of potatoes and leave them in the cellar. They want sauerkraut, they'd take it out of the barrel, squeeze it, and cook it.

S: Now did she do this on the weekends, or during the week?

J: What? The cooking, or the ... ?

S: The cooking.

J: Oh, well mostly weekends. The week she would cook too.

S: Did you have a lot of meat in your diet?

J: Ah, yah, but cold cuts mostly, or like ham. You know, smoke shoulders or fresh shoulders, because you didn't buy like today for two or three days, you bought every day. And I mean because the fellow from the store, who was running the store, used to come around and take your order, and then he'd deliver it for noontime. Then he'd come around when he delivered that, he wanted to know if you wanted anything for ...

Tape I, side A ends
Tape I, side B begins

S: Okay. So you had a grocery man that came around.

J: Yah.

S: And he took your order?

J: He took the order, yah.

S: Now was this a Polish grocery person?

J: Yah, Polish yah!

S: Were all the shop keepers your mother dealt with, Polish?

J: Yah, just like, or when they used to buy for the weekend they'd go downtown to buy to the big market. (S: Umhm) You could get some specials, like on smoked shoulders, or butter, or anything you know in bulk. But during the week it was mostly from the store. You get pressed ham, minced ham, or bologne, and stuff like that. (S: Umhm)

J: And it isn't like you pick it up in the supermarket now. You'd have say, half a pound of pressed ham, you'd cut it with the knife, (S: Hm) and a can of peas. And he'd have to go over to the shelf and get one can of peas for yah, you know. [Laughs]

S: It's different, huh? That's incredible.

J: So they got one article at a time, it wasn't no machine. (Tape skip)... wanted steak they had the whole leg of the cow there, and they used to slice it right off there.

S: Did you ever have steak when you were growing up?

J: Oh yah. [S: You had it enough?] Well we'd get it occasionally. Not, I mean not very often, but we'd have it at times.

S: What about ah, you must have had an ice man that came around?

J: There was an ice man, but everybody didn't have an ice box either. You were fortunate if you had an ice box. You'd probably get a hunk of ice for ten cents or fifteen cents. But everybody didn't have an ice box.

S: So what did you do? You just said...

J: That's why you bought for ...

S: Everyday!

J: From meal to meal, or for everyday.

S: Umhm. Now what about when your dad was working, your dad and your mom were working in the mills there, did you think ah, well did they first of all learn English very good?

J: Well not ah...Well they learned. They picked a little bit up, but not that much.

S: So who were their supervisors in the mills? Did they speak Polish?

J: No, mostly German.

S: German?

J: Because there was a section in Clinton where there was ah, what they called German Town. That was farther down the end of the street, (S: umhm) and part of the town, and it was like anything else. They came over from say Poland, they went where their people were. The Irish went in one area, the Polish went in one, Germans went in one, Italians went in another, and the Greeks were in another, and ah, there was a few, you know, mixed in with them, but more or less it was all one nationality in one area.

S: Yah. So they had German supervisors, but they couldn't speak too much English, your parents?

J: No, no they couldn't.

S: So how did they learn?

J: How did they learn?

S: They just watched somebody?

J: They watched somebody, or they went with somebody they already knew, and they showed them what to do. They caught on that way.

S: Umhm. Now what did your father work as?

J: Well he was a weaver.

S: He was a weaver. Did he work up to being a weaver, or did he..?

J: No, he started in the mill in Clinton. He learned to weave and that's what he was doing. My mother was the same.

S: Your mother was a weaver also?

J: Yah.

S: So between the two of the, how much do you think they brought home a week in pay?

J: Well ... maybe twenty, twenty five dollars, that was alot, they brought that between the two of them.

S: Yah.

J: See, they used to be on, they were on piece work, (S: umhm) you had a clock on each loom, if the loom didn't run you didn't make any money. They paid you so many...

S: These were cotton mills now?

J: Cotton, this was a cotton mill. They paid you so much for a hundred, what they called a hundred pics. And every hundred pics, that clock turned one. A hundred pics, when you're shuffling one a hundred times back and forth, that turned the clock one.

S: Ah, okay: You think they had any problem with um, well discrimination of any, certainly because they're Polish, and their supervisors were German?

J: Ah, some of them did. It depended on the individual, on the bosses. Some of them were okay, others weren't.

S: Umhm.

J: I wouldn't say they were all alike. Some were very good, others they weren't. So if you happened to have somebody that was, you know...

S: Did they have good bosses, your parents?

J: Well my father claimed most of the time he had good bosses.

S: And when he didn't, what did they do that ?

J: Well they just have to do what they're told, or else they'd be out on the street looking for a job. (Laughs) They wouldn't be working.

S: So when your father, he got to be a weaver, he had some influence from the mill himself by that point. Um, did he try and have other polish people hired too?

J: Well they, anybody that lived in this area, practically everybody I'd say worked in the Lancaster mills. There was a woolen mill, and there was a carpet mill, Bigelow [unclear] & Carpet. And there was a woolen mill in the other part of the town, and there's people working there of course, different people. They made more money in those mills than they made in the cotton mills. (S: Umhm) So if they know somebody, they say, "Yah, come on down." And they'd see if they could get them a job, you know, speak for them, (S: umhm) you know. This is my brother, or my cousin. If there was an opening, okay, but then the mill went bankrupt, back in twenty eight. They auctioned off all the houses, places closed down. In the meantime, before that, they use to have their slack periods (S: umhm). So you think my father would stay home, get welfare? No, he ...

S: They didn't have welfare!

J: They did. They were too proud to get it. It wasn't welfare in this form that they have today! He use to take off to Rhode Island, or Connecticut and look for a job, and we'd be home in Clinton.

S: Ah, and what about your Mom, would she try and get other work too?

J: There was none to be had!

S: Nothing to have. Oh.

J: Once in awhile, if he got the job he'd send ten dollars or thirteen depending on what he made.

S: Umhm. So from Clinton you said, you finally had to move to where? New Market?

J: New Market, New Hampshire for about a year.

S: And where did your parents get the money to move to New Market? I mean did, had they saved enough money to move there?

J: The company would move them.

S: Oh, the mill in New Market did?

J: The market would move them.

S: Oh, okay.

J: Yah. See, because they were anxious to get the people. (S: And there were enough weavers, yah) They were having labor trouble anyway in New Market. (S: Oh they sere having labor trouble.) Yah, and they would move anybody that wanted to work there.

S: And this was what, 1920?

J: This was in...Well starting in say 1929 and 30.

S: Umhm. And they were having labor trouble why? Because, they're in strikes for more pay, or better conditions?

J: Well, both I imagine.

S: Everything. So your parents went to work there, and did they have any trouble from other people who were, you know...

J: Well when they got there, most of the thing was going by, because that was brewing from a few years back. (S: umhm) And when they were going it was practically quiet, it all more or less quieted down. (S: Umhm) So there wasn't ... I remember when we moved in, there was no picketing or anything, everybody just went to work and that was it. But before there was, a few years before they even went there, there were.

S: So your first job was in New Market? (J: Umhm) And these were what kind of mills?

J: My first job in the mill.

S: Right.

J: When I worked, when I lived in Clinton, I used to work on the farm in the summer weeding, haying.

S: Oh, this was in Clinton you worked?

J: Yes.

S: During the summer. At what age did you start doing that?

J: Oh, well, any age you could get a job, you know. What I was going to say, twelve years old. You go on the farm and say ...

S: Now, is this your uncle's farm?

J: No, no.

S: No.

J: You just go up to the farmers and ask if they need any help. You know, they might need somebody for weeding. They weeded everything by hand. They didn't do it by machine. And then haying season you did the same thing. And you'd probably walk three or four miles going out to the farm in the morning, and back again at night.

S: Now did your parents tell you you had to do this, or you just did it?

J: Well they didn't say you have to, but they kind of reminded you it would be nice if you had a job.

S: Yah, and when you had those jobs did you... were you able to keep the money yourself?

J: Oh no! You never kept any money to yourself. (S: No!) You turned it all in.

S: (Laughing) You did!

J: If you got anything from turning it in you were lucky. You got your pay, you gave it to your parents.

S: Hm. Did your mom make all your clothes, or did she buy them at that point?

J: Well they made some. Most of it was bought, and it was hand-me-downs, you know.

S: Hm. Well what about... Now when you were in New Market, did your parents move to ah, what you call it, a company house?

J: Yah, they had company houses there too.

S: And what was that company house like?

J: Well there was no hot water there

S: Umhm. And this was in the, what, 1930's?

J: Thirties.

S: No hot water yet!

J: No, no. No they had no steam there. You had to have your own heat.

S: What kind of heat was it, coal?

J: Coal, wood and coal. (Both talking)

S: How many entrances were there? (J: It was up and down) It was up and down?

J: Yah. This was up in the house we lived in was up and down. And I think they paid like a dollar and a half a week. But one day, one week my father got a notice in his pay that he owed the company money for rent. (J: Llaughes) He didn't get anything, one week he got a check for five cents. I'm sorry I never...that they ever cashed it.

S: Ah!.

J: Yah. And if you went to learn to weave, or do any job you know, you did it on your own, you didn't get paid.

S: For training, you didn't?

J: No, no. You worked there, you stayed in there the same as the worker that was training you, and you didn't get nothing. And he didn't get, the person didn't get nothing for training you either.

S: And did you say that was a cotton or a silk mill in New Market?

J: No, that was a silk mill.

S: Silk mill.

J: Silk mill in New Market, yah.

S: Okay. So why did, um, what happened to that mill? Did that mill go under also?

J: Well I think they figured that ah, it was more profitable for them to move. Close down the mill in New Market, move it to Lowell and they would be better off financially, so, than they would by running it into different areas. (S: Umhm) So they closed down. People came to Lowell, the ones that were up there.

S: Now did the company pay your parents to move to Lowell too?

J: Ah, they paid, yah. They paid the moving expenses.

S: And where was the place in Lowell that you worked at?

J: Lowell Silk Mill, right on Market Street where that...

S: Oh, okay.

J: That housing is and all of that Market...

S: Where they've converted it into the Market Mills, yah.

J: Right, right!

S: Oh, okay.

J: That was the Silk Mill.

S: Now by that point you were working in the mill?

J: And your father and mother?

S: Right.

S: Anybody else in your family?

J: My sister and my brother.

S: Your parents were weaving? (J: Ya) And what were you kids doing?

J: I was stripping bobbins, and I went to crepe twisting. From there I went to weave, and I was weaving on one or two looms, making two or three dollars a week. (S: Hum) And if you made any bad cloth, they would deduct it from that. So you made \$2.50 a week, and you had .50 cents worth of seconds, then you'd get two dollars. (S: Um) When the N.R.A came into effect, that was a godsend, because they had to give you thirty cents an hour.

S: Oh yah.

J: So for forty hours you worked in the mill, you got at least twelve dollars a week.

S: Yah, [unclear].

J: And of course at that time you only had six looms. Then they started getting into, going into automatic looms. And you were getting more, more and more looms, because of the automatic looms. But you still weren't making like, the weavers weren't making much, fifteen dollars a week maybe ten, anywhere between ten. Well when the NRA came in, they had to give them twelve dollars. So they were making like between twelve and twenty dollars a week, depending on the type of cloth you made, because different types of cloths had a different price on it.

S: Umhm.

J: The only ones that made good money in the silk mill were the ones that worked on jacquards, I don't know if you ever heard of jacquards. They were fancy cloth, and they had a better price. They paid better on those...

S: Umhm.

J: Than on the regular rayon looms.

S: Well now they moved you to Lowell just as the depression was coming?

J: That's right!

S: And yet you kept your job all the way through the depression. Your family all kept their jobs?

J: Well they were...There were slack periods. (S: Umhm) You know, you probably wouldn't be working for a month, two months, three months.

S: And then, what did you do then?

J: What did you do? You didn't do anything, because there was no jobs around.

S: Did you go out and look for anything?

J: Oh sure, you'd go around looking for jobs. You'd go down let's say the Boott Mills, or the Merrimack, back to the Silk Mill where some of... Some of it was running, and some of it was shut down. And you'd wait there maybe an hour or two until the employment manager came around and says, nothing doing today. (S: Yah) Or if he wanted somebody, he already knew before hand who he was going to take. You, you, you step over here, nothing doing. That's all for today.

S: Now why, why ahead of time did he know? Those people, they were friends of his?

J: Well somebody that was working in the mill that probably had a job spoke for them.

S: Ahh. Now that's an interesting point. Did you find any discrimination there?

J: Well it was, because actually if you didn't know anybody, it would be so much harder for them to hire you, because usually they hired the people who hadn't been spoken for. See, you'd say, well I got a son, if you got a chance can you see if you can get him a job?

S: So it wasn't so much of different ethnic groups, like Irish or Polish, as much as it was family groups and all that?

J: Yah.

S: Oh, okay. Was there ever anytime when everybody in your family was out of work?
(J: Yah!) At the same time?

J: Yah, sure, sure.

S: So what did you do to live?

J: What do you do to live? Well if they had ... because they put a few pennies aside, that's what you lived from, you know.

S: Hm.

J: They didn't spend their money, you know, like today. They had a few dollars or two left they'd put it aside for a rainy day, and that's what they used.

S: So what was the longest period that you went without working, when you, you know, were working at the [unclear]?

J: Well I'd say maybe three months or so, maybe a little longer. And sometimes in between you'd probably get a week or two off you know. It used to be at that time, if there was a certain style, if they weren't running they'd close that section down. They

couldn't sell that cloth, they'd close that section down. You were out of a job. The people would still be working there, but you wouldn't be working, because that particular...there wasn't a need, or a call for that particular material.

S: How was the mill in Lowell? Was that clean? Did they try and keep that clean too, or (--)

J: It was pretty clean. As I say, they had sweepers going around, you know, sweeping. They had to, or they'd have a lot of waste on the floor. But it was hot, because they use to have humidifiers running to keep dampness in the air to avoid the static electricity, you know, (S: Um) in the yarn.

J: And like in the summer, there was no air conditioning, it use to be awful hot.

S: Did you open the windows, or... ?

J: Sometimes they could, and sometimes they wouldn't, because it would effect the work.

S: Oh, because of the humidity and all that.

J: Yah, yah.

S: Oh.

J: I was just talking about, but that's the weave room. In the slash room they had windows opened. Even with the windows open, it didn't do them people any good, because they were working like hundred twenty degrees.

S: Now what was that? The slash...

J: Slash room!

S: What did they do in the slash room?

J: They made the warps for the weave room, (S: Oh okay) where they put ... it wasn't a glue, but a sizing on the yarn so it wouldn't fall apart, see.

S: Oh, okay.

J: And they had these drums, steam was in them, maybe 150 degrees, or 120, (S: umhm) to dry the yarn as it went through. They had a [unclear] like, the yarn and the liquid was in there, the sizing. The yarn would go through there, and then it would go through five or six drums, which was staggered, one up, one down, one up, one down, in different degrees in each drum. And at the end, they'd put it on the warp, on the beam.

S: Yah.

J: That was the slash room. Before they'd get it into the slash room, they had to make the warps in the warping room, what they called. They had a big creel and spools, maybe on...depending on the amount of yarn they wanted on the warp, maybe five hundred spools on the creel. They used to come (--) There's a big wheel and all those ends would come down. (S: Umhm) They used to have what they called, they used to make them in laps. They wanted twenty, fifty laps. They'd do fifty laps of a section like that, and then fifty more, fifty more, and it would all go on to this beam. And of course if an end broke, that broke down. So they had to piece it up, tie it up and run it again.

S: You say the slash room was the hardest?

J: Oh the hardest, yah! I know it.

S: People ever faint and everything there?

J: Well I never heard of anybody fainting, but they were hot!

S: They were hot. [Both laugh]

J: They were, sure they were hot. (S: Hm) So it came from the warp room, the slash room, and they had what they called twisters. They use to have hand twisters first, each end. You might have five thousand ends from the loom to the warp. They used to have to tie them in by hand.

S: And this was still in 1930?

J: Yah. And then they had a little powder pouch, and they used to put it on their fingers so they could twist it.

S: Hm.

J: And eventually they did get what they called a knotting machine, and a hand twister, which they twisted the yarn in by machine, but from being in there they did it by hand, most of it by hand.

S: Wow. So did you like that kind of work, weaving?

J: No, not really, but that's all that was around.

S: [Laughs] What would you have done if you had a choice?

J: Well you would...you didn't know it. At that time you had no idea, you got...you took whatever was available, because there was nothing available. So if you were working, you were fortunate to be working. So you didn't have much choice.

S: Why didn't you like it?

J: Well for one thing it wasn't a pleasant job. It was noisy, and you couldn't make any money.

S: And what kind of hours did you work?

J: Well, for fifty four hours a week. Saturday morning we had to work. Or if you worked nights, it was like maybe forty eight hours, because sometimes you start five. Sunday night, midnight until six.

S: Did you get extra pay for working nights?

J: No.

S: No, (J: No) and no benefits either?

J: No benefits, no. There was no such thing as vacation pay, or bonus, or anything like that. But ah, that was in the silk mill. I went to work in 1936, the Wannalancit Textile.

S: Now did your whole family go to the Wannalancit?

J: No, no, I went myself.

S: Why did you go, just for better opportunities?

J: Well there was... I had no job. So I was looking around, and that's where I got the job. And this was only an old... Well he was the fellow Larter. I don't know if you heard of him?

S: What was his name?

J: Larter, (spells) L A R T E R. You never heard of him? He told me that his son donated that big wheel.

S: Oh, okay. Okay. I got you, yah.

J: You know him?

S: Yah. I've heard of him.

J: Well that's his son who bought that. I worked... His father was my...the owner of the mill. (S: Oh) Allen Larter, he got killed in an accident. He was married to an... are you from Tech, the Lowell University?

S: No. (J: No?) Oh I'm from the University, but not from this area.

J: Do you work there, or you go to school here?

S: School.

J: Yah. Well there's a building there, Olney.

S: Olney Hall, yah.

J: Yah, well that was Mr. Larter's father- in-law. (S: Oh) He was a professor, a well liked professor, a very smart man. (S: Huh) Yah, and they named that building after him. He actually got Larter started in Textile business. And he had a son and a couple of daughters I guess.

S: Now Wannalancit, what did they make?

J: They made raven cloth. I started the weaver there, then I went to smash piecing, which was near... If there was a large breakout, you marked it, the weaver marked it on the board. And people, they called smash [pieces], they tied all the ends up, and started the machine up again, and then to loom fixing.

S: Is that hard on your eyes, doing that kind of work?

J: Well I would say it is, yah.

S: Yah, tying all those ends.

J: Tying all the ends, and then you have to draw them through, like a head drop wire in the back. Then the heddle which had like a needle eye hole in them, and then through a reed

S: And how many pedals would each loom have on it?

J: Depending on the size of the warp, the type, the style of the warp, may be five thousand, three thousand, eight thousands.

S: And someone had to draw all those through?

J: If they started a new warp completely with a different style, they had to draw it in. They had a drawing in room, what they called, and that's what they used to draw them through the heddles, and then through the reeds. They had little pegs like in the reeds. And then after they had all those in, and they put it on the loom, then they had to put a drop wire on each end. So if an end broke the machine would stop. It wouldn't run without a broken end.

S: So as a weaver you had to be careful though, of the patterns and make sure everything was coming out?

J: Well yah. Well it was there already. Your main concern was production, and first quality cloth. It's possible that an end would break, and the drop wire wouldn't drop right, and the machine could be going. So you'd have a hole in the cloth, which was no good. You can get docked for it.

S: Came out of your paycheck?

J: Yah.

S: How many looms did you keep an eye on at once?

J: Well if you're working on the straight loom, we had eight and ten looms, that's hand looms, at the Wannalancit. But then they changed that amount. They wound up with twenty four. When they last were running in the Wannalancit, before they closed I think they were running sixty or seventy looms for one weaver.

S: So you really moved!

J: [Laughing] Well I never run that many, because I left before they got to that stage.

S: You need roller skates to...

J: But just walking up and down trying to keep those looms going all day long is a job.

S: Well I guess. How many did you have?

J: Well I was fixing them. (S: Umhm) So I had like ah, forty looms to fix. If they broke down, or something wrong with the loom, they'd call you.

S: Now why did you go to loom fixing? Was it a better paying job?

J: Better paying job.

S: And when you worked there ...

J: When I worked at Wannalancit, you're talking about cleanliness. That man, he wanted everything spic and span. He saw oil on the floor, he wanted you to wipe it off. That was Mr. Larter, Allen Larter himself. I don't know about the son. The son never worked there while I was there. He took over later, after. But the father, he was a hard worker. He could do everything in the mill. The only thing I ever saw him do is fix looms. (S: Ah) But he could slash, he could warp, he could twist.

S: So the workers had a lot of respect for him?

J: Yah, but he didn't pay too much!

S: Oh! [Giggles]

J: He was funny. He use to come with a bag of money and ask, "How much I owe you," every week, but there was people that were really down and he helped. He knew they were hard up, and if they asked him for help, he helped them.

S: He did.

J: Oh yah, he helped alot of them there. But if you tried to get a raise from him, it was hard.

S: You couldn't [unclear].

J: Yah.

S: That's funny. So you moved to Lowell here, like you said, when you were sixteen. Where did you move to in Lowell? Do you remember what street it was?

J: Yah, Charles Street.

S: Oh, right in downtown.

J: Down here, yah, where I lived on the side where the stores are now, Zayres and the other stores there.

S: Umhm.

J: That's the side I lived on. The other side they didn't take.

S: Now was that company housing?

J: And then from there we moved to Lawrence Street, on the corner of Charles and Lawrence. (S: Umhm) No, those weren't company houses, no.

S: What kind of houses were they?

J: They were privately owned. You paid rent to a landlord. And there was no tub, bath tub. No hot water when we came to Lowell.

S: Nothing?

J: No, you wanted to take a bath, you heat water and put it in a galvanized tub, and take your bath.

S: In the kitchen, huh?

J: Yup. You didn't change water for each one that wanted to take a bath. [Laughs]

S: You didn't?

J: No.

S: No?

J: No. [Both laughing]

S: So how many people would use the same water?

J: Maybe three, then you'd change it.

S: Yah. Well that's alot of work, heating the water for all that, huh? (J: Yah) Now this was on Charles Street?

J: That was on Charles Street, yah. But when we moved to the corner of Lawrence and Charles, there was a bath tub there, but there was no hot water. You had to heat it and put it there.

S: Was that um...See on Charles Street that was a boarding house you said.

J: No, no. It was ah ...

S: A private?

J: A four tenement house that we lived in. (S: It was?) We lived upstairs. There was two families downstairs, and two families upstairs.

S: How many rooms did you have in that?

J: One, two, three rooms, three rooms and a kitchen. They were all used for bedrooms mostly.

S: So your guest came to your kitchen mostly?

J: Oh yah, yah.

S: What was that like? Was that a nice place to live, or not too bad?

J: Well, you made the best of what you had, you made it nice.

S: Yah.

J: I'll say one thing, it was clean, because everybody kept them clean.

S: What kind of rent did you have to pay in a place like that?

J: I'm not quite sure now. I think we were paying like three dollars and a half a week when we first came to Lowell. Course they kept going up all the time.

S: And did you have a yearly ...

TAPE I, SIDE B ENDS

TAPE II, SIDE A BEGINS.

J: Here's a picture of the people that worked, and that's the floor that I worked on.

S: Oh. Now this was at which mill?

J: That was Lowell Silk Mill, Newmarket [unclear].

S: So when was this taken, this picture?

J: About 1933.

S: Umhm. Now where are you in the picture?

J: That's the boss Alvin [Last name unclear]. He was the boss of this group.

S: Umhm. And how old were you then about what?

J: About eighteen.

S: Eighteen.

J: Those are mostly weavers, and fixers, and drop wire. We worked on the same floor.

S: Any of your relatives there this picture up here?

J: Not, not, no relatives, but just people that really knew one another. Now I know a few that came from Clinton, you know.

S: Umhm.

J: Like this fellow here. This here, that's ah... Lipka, [name unclear]. I'm just saying it, because I know them, we all came together here. That's [name unclear], Mrs. [name unclear], and that's Mrs. Lipka, that's her son there.

S: So a lot of the Polish people followed?

J: Now these are not all Polish. There's a lot of... He's Jewish, Albert [Gallant]. He's Portuguese, Tony Perry.

S: Now he was your boss, this Albert?

J: Albert [Gallant]. His brother was the owner, Walter [Gallant].

S: Was he a good boss?

J: Him? (S: Umhm) You could get along with him. He wasn't bad.

S: (Laughs) He was okay!

J: Yah. He had his faults, but who didn't you know? (S: Yah) I wouldn't say he was the worst guy at all. There's a fellow who was really lousy, and he's Polish too!

S: Why was he lousy?

J: Oh, he thought he was just it! He thought he owned the mill himself. He thought he was God!

S: What did he do?

J: He was a loom fixer, then he became a second hand.

S: Oh!

J: Which was a boss of a certain area. (S: Umhm) Nobody liked him. I don't know of anybody that had any good word about him.

S: The boss must of liked him?

J: Oh yah! Well they got along. Of course the bosses, you know, more or less had to get along with one another. That's why they got there, you know.

S: Umhm. So you lived on Charles Street, and....

J: On the corner of Lawrence and Charles Street.

S: Now which one was Mrs. Murphy's?

J: Mrs. Murphy's? (S: Yah) How did you know Mrs. Murphy?

S: Donna told me about it.

J: Who?

S: Donna Mailloux.

J: Oh yah! I didn't even know I told her. She was the owner of the house.

S: Of which one now?

J: Of the one on Charles Street.

S: Charles Street, umhm. Now was it a boarding house or just a private?

J: No, no it was a house, it wasn't a boarding house.

S: Yah. Oh she didn't serve meals and all to people.

J: Oh no, no, no, no, no. She just came, or you just went and paid her rent.

S: Umhm.

J: She had an office on Appleton Street. (S: Umhm) And she had some kind of an agency there, and you went and paid her rent. She never even came around to the house to collect the rent. You went down there and paid it.

S: Oh, so she lived somewhere else?

J: Oh she didn't live on Charles Street, she wouldn't live in there!

S: Oh! [Laughs]

J: What's the matter with you?

S: I...

J: That place wasn't good enough for her.

S: Where did she live?

J: I think she lived up on Andover Street, someplace around that area.

S: She had a fancy home!

J: But she never came around to bother the tenants, but she never did too much for the tenants either.

S: She didn't? She didn't repair things?

J: She got her money.

S: That was when you were what, about sixteen you lived there?

J: Well yah, sixteen, because that's when we came to Lowell. That's where we moved first, then we moved there to the corner of Lawrence and Charles, just up the street a little.

S: And when you moved there, how old were you?

J: That was a little better place, there was more room. There was four rooms there, I think, and there was a bath tub there. (S: umhm) There was no hot water, but there was a bath tub.

S: And what did you pay for rent there? About the same?

J: About five dollars. By that time things had gone up. That was still a lot then for what you were getting.

S: It was nicer than the Charles Street place?

J: Well it was a little better than the place on Charles Street.

S: So how long did you live at home for?

J: Me?

S: Yah, with your parents?

J: Till I got married.

S: Till you got married!

J: Yah, [Laughs] till 1940.

S: Till 1940 you lived there? (J: Umhm) And until that time, whenever you had earned money you gave it to your parents?

J: Oh sure!

S: Were you able to save anything of your own?

J: No, how could you? If you got the change... Say you got twelve dollars and a half in your pay, you kept the fifty cents and they might have given you a dollar. [Both laughing]

S: It's hard to imagine! Boy!

J: So until about a year before I got married then they let me keep more, you know, like half the pay. Put a few bucks away, a couple bucks away.

S: And how long did you work the Wannalancit Mill?

J: Till 1953.

S: Oh, so you kept right on through the depression though. You kept working there!

J: Yah, but we had our slack periods there.

S: Now wait, when did the flood happen in Lowell?

J: Thirty six, 1936. [Tape turned off then on again] That's where the Wang Tower is, in downtown now.

S: Oh, huh!

J: This is in thirty eight. There was a minstrel show in there. The Harvard Brewery, that's where Sears is now. You could go up there in the afternoon and get free beer. (Son comes in) Oh hi! That's my son, JB.

S: Hi, I'm Sue Jefferson.

JB: Nice to meet you.

J: He works for the Park part time. Here's a [black] Polish fellow, Jake (Tye?) owned that Wonder Bar Restaurant. Here's the menu.

S: Now where was this located? (Both are looking through pictures)

J: In Centerville, right across the bridge ah, Bridge Street Bridge.

S: Oh okay. Look at the prices of things.

J: They use to have these booklets with songs in them.

S: Oh, and where do these come from? (Reading) "Given by the younger social set of Greater Boston, Saturday evening, Ritz Plaza Ballroom." "[Unclear] Mitchell and his club [unclear]."

J: That's a society I belonged to, Saint Joseph's at the church back in '34. You'd have a dance. You'd have your...

S: Now you signed up for each dance that was somebody else? (J: Yah, yah) Oh these are neat. Now who's this?

J: Oh this? That's the woman who ... the girl I knew on Charles Street, up the other end of the street. Samowsky her name was, but you wouldn't know her. She passed away last year I think.

S: So each person you danced with, they put their initial, you sign them up.

J: Yah, you signed them up, you know.

S: Now how did you meet your wife?

J: At a picnic. Well I knew her before, but that's where we really met from the picnic.

S: A picnic in Lowell, somewhere?

J: Well yah, they had them like in Pelham, Blueberry Hill in Dracut, where the park is, and different farmers used to have it, you know.

S: Umhm. Oh boy! Look at all these! (Both looking through old pictures)

J: Here's the picture.

S: That was the flood, yah.

J: The flood, and then March 1936. See this is Bridge Street and Lakeview Avenue. Right across where the bridge is, (S: oh) the water is right over the bridge, see?

S: Isn't that something! Who was buried? (She reads) "Autos buried in sand in Lakeview Avenue."

J: Lakeview Avenue.

S: Holy Trinity. Now there's what, two different Polish Churches?

J: No, there's only one. There's a Holy Trinity Greek, and a Holy Trinity Polish.

S: Well wasn't there St. Casimir's?

J: There's a Saint Casmir's, yah, that's not for Roman Catholics. That's a national... what they call it. That's in Centralville, down on West Street. This is the flood too.

S: Oh. Is this someone you know?

J: Oh yah, yah. And that's our basketball team. We used to play. Crescent Rain, Colonial Hall, which is on, where Middlesex Supply use to be at one time, there was a hall there. That was the pastor of the church, Ogonowsky.

S: Hm, you have some wonderful stuff! This is Holy Trinity.

J: Yah, that's the church.

S: Oh, here's... Is that the flood again? (J: Yah) So when you worked at the mill, the flood didn't effect the Wannalancit Mill?

J: No, no, the flood... the Wannalancit was on Jackson Street. (S: Oh) You know, and the canal, they closed the bridge. So they closed the gates so the water wouldn't go down the canal. If it did, it would have flooded the whole downtown area. (S: Oh!) The Francis Gate, you know.

S: Oh. So your mill wasn't effected by all that?

J: Ah, no, it didn't really effect them, no. That's Varnum Avenue.

S: Oh, can I look at this?

J: Sure!

S: How about where you lived, did they have any problems there?

J: No, no we lived on Charles Street. It never got that, that far.

S: But what did you see during that time? I mean did you see...?

J: Oh we were curious, we went down, try and cross the bridge, and they wouldn't let you, you know, because the water was getting higher and higher, and eventually it went right over the bridge.

S: Did you people go down and try to help anybody, or ... ?

J: Oh yah! Everybody tried to help somebody. Now there's the water over that Bridge Street Bridge, see? (S: Hum) That's what the bridge looked like then.

S: That's incredible. (J: It was completely) Now which one...Aiken Street Bridge was washed out?

J: Now this is Centraville, Bridge Street, Aiken Street is farther down.

S: Now which one is that? The one over by the...

J: Right downtown. You know where the square is? (S: Yah) Merrimack... ah, Kearney Square?

S: Oh, okay. I've got you.

J: Yah, you're going over to Centralville.

S: Gosh! Isn't that something!

J: No, nobody seen these from the park or anything.

S: Oh, I'm sure they'd love to! These are wonderful pictures.

J: Now you know where Lowell University is near Aiken Street?

S: Umhm.

J: That building they got?

S: By Fox Hall? Yah, that tall...

J: Yah. Not Fox Hall, where the ah, the parking lot. Originally they were going to have a nuclear...

S: Oh okay.

J: Okay. That's where the Laurier Baseball Park was. (S: Hm) There use to be a ball field there.

S: Look at the damage that the flood did. (J: Yup) That's something! So did they have to have the National Guard come in and help during that time?

J: I think they came in to help clean up, yup, after the water receded.

S: Well what about did they have any problems about looting, and anything like that, or they just didn't have that much?

J: They just didn't get over. The only way you could possibly get over the other side of the city was at the, oh, Mammoth Road Bridge. And then they eventually closed that I

think. That was the only way you could get over the other side of the city. (S: Hm) You couldn't use Aiken Street, or Bridge Street Bridge.

S: Oh, I see. Now it wasn't just Lowell, it was a lot of cities.

J: Oh... no, no!

S: I didn't realize that. Nashua...

J: Well you see they had so much snow and rain that year, in those years, and there was no flood controls. They only put the flood control in after. After that happened, that they started building the controls, the Army Engineers.

S: Now did the flood effect the Silk Mill where your parents were working?

J: No.

S: No, it didn't effect that either?

J: No, it didn't get that high. As I say, even though canals running through there, they closed them...

S: They closed them.

J: The Francis Gate and the water didn't go through the canals.

S: Yah, so they kept it within.

J: Otherwise it would have flooded the whole downtown area, the canals would of been all flooded.

S: So how long did your parents work in that mill?

J: The late fifties.

S: Oh, so they kept right on working through too?

J: Oh yah.

S: They didn't have any ah...

J: Well then my father worked, after that he worked in the Joan...not the Joan, in a Woolen Mill, in North Chelmsford. I forget the name of it now.

S: But there were still jobs around?

J: Yah, there were different jobs, not in the silk mills.

S: Umhm.

J: As I say, there were lots of mills too. (S: Yah) The Boott Mill, The Merrimack, the Nashua Manufacturing, but they had their slack periods. So you just couldn't get a job. They weren't available.

S: So for fun, because you know, it was the depression and you didn't have much money, what did you do for fun?

J: Well, we use to go up the Common, South Common. (S: umhm) Every night there was a ball game up there. They had an industrial league like they called, and we'd watch the ball game till maybe 8:30, 8:00, 8:30. (S: Umhm) Play cards, not gamble. You didn't have the money to gamble.

S: Now is that where you met your girlfriends?

J: Well, no, or dance, at the dances.

S: Did you have dates then? You went to dances to meet girls? (J: Yah) This was just strictly guys basically?

J: Yah. Well Saturday night was a big night. You had thirty five cents, you went up Commodore. You know where that is?

S: No, where is that?

J: You know where the depot is, railroad station is, Gallagher? That dilapidated building now?

S: Yah.

J: Well that used to be a beautiful ballroom, one of the best in this area. (S: Yah) Yah!

S: And it cost only thirty five cents?

J: Thirty five cents, yah, Saturday night.

S: And you wouldn't take a girl there, you'd meet her?

J: Oh no, no. They knew you were going. The girls would pay their way. You never...

S: Ah!

J: You very very seldom would...Or a couple, you might... I wouldn't say there's none at all, but some.

S: Yah.

J: There was some, but most of them were single.

S: Yah.

J: Girls went there, and of course some of them met after the dance, and went out after the dance. Where did they go? Down the Square. There used to be a Waldorf there, and a Plaza there, Lowell Plaza, the restaurant. And you could get a hot dog for a nickel, a hamburg for a dime, [laughs] coffee for a nickel, and that's why you went down there. And you wasn't afraid anyone would knock you on your head or anything, you know!

S: Yah.

J: And ah, or you went to one of the small diners on the way down.

S: Umhm.

J: If you knew where they were.

S: So did you go with a group of your friends, or did?

J: Yah, we used to. A lot of times we'd go Saturday night dance, or else some weeks you just go and make a tour of the city, of the barrooms. You get together maybe five or six guys, "oh let's go down to Market Street." We'd go down. Beer was a... if you had a dollar you were rich you know. Everybody'd buy a round. So it cost you a quarter if there was five.

S: Now was there any special barroom that everybody liked better than the other?

J: Well we use to hang around Sousa's Cafe right on the corner of Charles and Central. That used to be... because everybody was from that area.

S: Oh.

J: So they hung around there. Even if you didn't buy anything you could go in there and chew the fat.

S: Now was it just Polish people?

J: No, no, no, everybody.

S: Everybody.

J: It was a mixed group, and there was a pool room right across the street. You stay there. And you wanted a beer you'd say, "Oh, let's go out and have a beer." Go down there.

S: Yah, it was just men? (J: Hm?) Just men?

J: Well we used to go out, yah, but there was women in the bar.

S: There was!

J: Oh yah. And sometimes there used to be a place on Middle Street, in the back there where there's a parking lot now, across from Roger's Toy Store. The Park Cafe. They used to have free pretzels, cheese and pretzels, every Saturday night. Buy the beer and there'd be all the pretzels and cheese you could eat for a nickel. [Laughs] Well I mean the beer was a nickel.

S: Yah.

J: So we'd go there sometimes.

S: And what else did you do for fun? You went to picnics?

J: Oh, we played ball, you know, (S: yag) baseball. We didn't have these balls they have today. If you had an old tape, a ball, you could put tape on it, that black tape, you taped and played with it. Not the hard covered. Yah, we played ball. You'd go to a dance, or...

S: Did you have a lot of socials through church?

J: Through the church, yah. Well I...maybe had a basketball team, which they had you play a couple times a week. And then they used to run dances. They used to run dances at Coburn Street there, at the Polish Hall, what they call Dom Polski. It's still there and they still have a lot of activities there.

S: Did your parents ever go out?

J: Yah, they went to...

S: They went ...

J: Saturday night they'd go out and have a few beers, sure! Or they'd go to the club.

S: But not until you were older. Did they do that when you were ... (J: We were old enough) No, but I mean when you were little kids, did they go out?

J: Oh yah. Oh, when we were little kids we were living in Clinton. (S: Umhm) They had dances there. The societies had a dance.

S: Hm, and they went out.

J: They went to the dance, yah.

S: And who watched the kids?

J: The older kids.

S: The older kids, okay. So your wife is from Lowell also?

J: From Lowell. She's from Lowell, yah.

S: And did she work in a mill also, or?

J: She used to work in the Suffolk Knitting. (S: umhm) That was on Jackson Street.

S: Umhm, and what did she do there?

J: They used to make sweaters. She was one of the girls that inspected sweaters, or do something with sweaters.

S: So did she work there up until you got married?

J: No, no, she worked in the [Unclear] Craft, what they called. They used to make ah..., well... I forget what they make now. And she worked at Northeast Paper. They used to make greeting cards there on Lawrence Street, where there's condominium houses up now.

S: Umhm. So when you got married... Well first of all you met her at a picnic, (J: Yah) and in those days what did you do? You just kept meeting each other at different places, ah, like dances and picnics, and all that?

J: Before or?

S: Before you got married, yah?

J: Oh yah!

S: And then you just started dating?

J: Yah, yah. We used to have picnic Sundays. It would start in the afternoon, and it goes like one o'clock, and it goes till 7:30, 8:00 you know.

S: Umhm. What did they do at the picnic? Did they have games?

J: Ah, mostly dancing, and ah... they had food. So dancing and food, and they had liquor, you know, if you had money to buy it. So we run the first marathon in Lowell.

S: You did?

J: Sure, from the Holy Trinity Parish up on High Street, back in the thirties. From the church up to the Pelham ah, what they call the Falcon Park. (S: Umhm) It's not there anymore.

S: How many miles was that?

J: About six or seven.

S: And did you get a prize, or it was just for the fun?

J: Oh yah, they gave prizes. Ones like first three or something like that.

S: Umhm.

J: And ah, course there was a ballroom at Lakeview.

S: Oh, the Lakeview Amusement Park, yah.

J: Yah, there was a dance hall there.

S: How did you get out there?

J: Took the trolley, or else somebody might have had a car. If they give you a ride, you went with them.

S: No you didn't have a car at this point?

J: No, no. And there they used to have what they called, you had to have a ticket to dance, you know. (S: You did?) You'd buy your ticket. It depend who was playing. Sometimes they were a nickel. Sometimes they were three for a quarter, depends on the band.

S: Umhm.

J: The girls didn't buy them. The guy that wanted to dance, he had to give them a ticket.

S: Oh.

J: There was a Merrimack Park too, in Methuen, on the Methuen line, on the Lowell Lawrence Boulevard. (S: Yah) There was an amusement park there.

S: And they had a dance place there too?

J: A small one yah, not big. But the Commodore was the place.

S: That was the place to go. Did you have to dress really fancy to get in there?

J: Well you had a suit on you know. (S: Umhm) Yah, the girls use to dress their best, and the fellows used to have their suits, yah. Oh yah, when you went to a dance you had a suit on, and you'd go and dance.

S: What were the songs that you remembered they played? Do you remember anything special?

J: Oh well, not special, but, "There's No Sun Up In The Sky, Stormy Weather."

S: Hm.

J: I associate that with Lakeview Avenue, Lakeview Park. (S: Yah) They used to play that a lot.

S: Did they have different bands that played?

J: Oh yah, different bands.

S: It wasn't always the same one.

J: No, no, no. The Commodore had big name bands on a Wednesday night I think.

S: Like who? Who was a big name band then?

J: Tom Brown. I don't remember the names. They used to, [unclear] the prices went up for the big name bands.

S: How much did you have to pay for that?

J: Well the regular dance was thirty five cents. Depending how big they were, it would be like maybe fifty cents, seventy five cents.

S: Really, that was a lot, huh?

J: Yah. And then they had what they called "old timers" dancing there Tuesday nights at the Commodore.

S: And what was that?

J: Well just what it was, they played slower pieces for the old timers. [Both laugh]

S: That's funny.

J: What they called "Old Timers Night."

S: Well you say slower pieces. What was popular dancing when you were...?

J: Well Fox Trot was the popular dance then.

S: Yah.

J: And the Waltz, mostly Waltz they played for the old timers.

S: Oh. Huh. So when you met your wife and all, how long were you engaged for before you married?

J: Oh, about a year or two.

S: About a year? (J: Yah) And you got married. And where did you live then?

J: Well ah, we lived with my in-laws first. (S: umhm) How many people do that today? [Both laugh]

S: So where was that? What part of Lowell was that?

J: Right where... On Lawrence Street, (S: Umhm) between Lawrence and Cady Street. Then we moved up to Cady Street.

S: How long did you live up your in-laws for?

J: Oh, maybe a year and a half, then we moved up the street.

S: It must of been hard though, with everybody in one household. Everybody just sort of pitched in?

J: Well you know, it was an excepted thing at that time, you know.

S: Because of the economy too. (J: Yah) So you were working what, as a loom fixer then?

J: Umhm.

S: And after you got married did your wife work?

J: Yah, she worked. (S: She worked) Then I went into the service and she was still working.

S: You went into the service then? (J: Oh yah, in '44). Where were you in the service? What branch of the service?

J: In ah, Naval Aviation (S: Umhm) down in Pennsicola, Florida.

S: Did you go overseas, or?

J: No, I was fortunate. I was on an auxiliary station there, because in Pennsicola they had the main station, the naval air station, which is still there.

S: Umhm.

J: And I was in...

TAPE II, SIDE A ENDS

TAPE II, SIDE B BEGINS.

S: So you were up by Great Lakes Naval Training?

J: Oh yah, not at the Great Lakes. I went to 87, what they had 87th and Anthony's. That was a Naval Aviation Training Center on engines.

S: That was right in downtown?

J: It was right in Chicago, at 87th and Anthony Street, in Chicago. It wasn't right downtown. It was, I think, on the West Side, because we had to take the trolley if we wanted to get in town, and maybe take us ten, fifteen minutes.

S: Oh, okay.

J: Yah. They had a big USO on the waterfront here at the lakefront.

S: Um, yah. And so when did you get home from the war?

J: In eighty-six.

S: Forty six?

J: No, eighty-six. Oh, eighty-six...forty-six!

S: Yah. (Laughs)

J: Yah, in February of forty-six.

S: And all that time your wife was still working here?

J: Well she came down to see me a couple of times, down Pennsicola. And when I was in Chicago she came down there.

S: Yah. And so when you came back you just went back to work for the mills?

J: Right, I went back to Wannalancit.

S: And how long did you work for the mills for?

J: Till fifty-three, and I went to work for the Correction Department.

S: Now why did you quit the mills finally?

J: To make more money in the Correction Department. (Laughs)

S: Really! How much were you getting when you quit the mills?

J: When I quit the mill, \$36.00 a week. (S: \$36.00?) Umhm.

S: And then you went to work for Corrections? (J: Umhm) And did you like that work better?

J: Well it was more money. So that's the name of the game there.

S: That was the important thing there!

J: I couldn't make it where I was. Although it wasn't that much more, but it was a better opportunity there than in the mill.

S: Yah. What do you remember about when you were young? When you were sick, what did your parents do? Did they call a doctor, or did they take care of you themselves!

J: Mostly took care of it themselves. (S: Umhm) When we were sick there was like two doctors when we were in Clinton. And I remember the names, Dr. Abbott, and Dr. Grady. And those were the two that they stuck by one or the other. (S: Umhm) But most of the time they treated you themselves, unless it was really serious.

S: What did they make? Their own home remedies?

J: Yah, yah. I had a piece of wood in my neck, because I was swinging on a tree and the branch went into my neck. And the nurse just put salve and a bandage on it, and left it like that. My mother looked at it in a couple of days, it was the same. So she says, "There's something in there." So she got a needle hot, and dug in and got a piece of wood out!

S: Whoah!.

J: Then she used her own remedy to cure it.

S: Yah.

J: Sure! And I cut my foot here with an ax. I didn't go to the doctors and get it stitched.

S: No?

J: She used her remedy.

S: Your mother did it? (J: Yah) You didn't have any anesthetic or ... ?

J: Noooooo!

S: No! (J: Oh no.) Hm, God!

J: When we lived in Clinton it was... my cousins had farms; one in Bolton, one in Boylston, one in Berlin, we use to go there a lot. I used to go with my father. We had a piece of land, plant vegetables. We used to go up there after work. When my father got out of work, "let's go up there and go water the plants." Stayed there till it was dark, then we'd come home. That was it!

S: Do you remember anybody you knew going in the hospital?

J: Yah, when they went into a hospital they thought they were going to die.

S: They did?

J: Oh yah! If you had appendicitis (S: Yah) they thought you would never come back.

S: Why, because the hospitals weren't clean?

J: I don't know, they just had that feeling that you know, it was a deadly sickness. (S: Hm) Oh, if you had cancer, which they did at that time, (S: umhm) they used to call it (RAK) in Polish, which means cancer. They say if you had that there was no hope at all.

S: They just gave up!

J: Yup. Yah, there was a hospital in Clinton, Clinton Hospital and then...

S: Was that runned by the corporation, or by the company?

J: It was a private hospital.

S: Oh it was private.

J: Yah, and then ah, some people went to Worcester Hospital.

S: What about your Mom? Did she have her children at home?

J: At home, yah.

S: She did.

J: Yah, they never went to the hospital.

S: And how soon after having children did she go back to work?

J: Ah, I really...

S: You can't remember?

J: I can't remember that. But I do remember ... I'm the oldest one now, but I had a brother that was older that drowned in the river, Nashua River, which flows from Clinton actually, right from the Wachussetts dam, run in back of the Lancaster Mills. And in the Spring it use to get awful high. And my brother was reaching out for something that was floating down and fell in. And they found him maybe a mile down the ...

S: How old was he?

J: He was maybe six or something like that. And ah, I remember they used to have horse drawn hearse then.

S: So that...Oh you remember his funeral?

J: Yah, he was dressed in white.

S: Where did they...Did they take him to a funeral home or ... ?

J: No, they layed him out at home.

S: At home. What did you have the undertaker come to your house?

J: Yah.

S: Was this a Polish undertaker, or just some...

J: No, no, no, the undertaker's name was Murphy.

S: Murphy?

J: In Clinton, yah.

S: And they came to the house and they... ?

J: They came to the house ...

S: And fixed him up.

J: Well they took the body and then they brought the body back.

S: Oh they did?

J: Yah, umhm.

S: Oh, and then where did they lay him out?

J: In the house. They layed him out in the house.

S: They did? (J: Yah) And now, then did you have a day or two where people come over too?

J: Right, right.

S: What was it like? I mean different groups have different ways of ... I mean was...Did a lot of people come over and, (J: Oh yes) and have lots of food. And was there drinking, or was it festive, or sad, or...

J: It was sad. It was sad.

S: It was, ya.

J: Ya. They had him out in the house. There was always food. (S: Umhm)

S: Did your mother make the food, or did all the neighbors bring it?

J: Some would bring it.

S: Umhm.

J: She had some, and some would bring it. It was ah, if you wanted to stay, have something to eat, or something to drink it was there, but it was a sad affair.

S: How about, like would the men go off into one room and the ladies in another, or they all just sat around together?

J: You sat wherever you could (S: Laughs) if there was a spot to sit, because the rooms weren't that big, you know.

S: So how long did they keep him at your house?

J: Couple of days. Couple of days, because he wasn't that young, so they didn't... [Unclear] two or three days, depending when they died. Like if they were layed out in the afternoon they might [unclear] two and a half days, you know.

S: Hm. And then they took him up to the church?

J: Ya, from the house you go to the church. After the mass you'd go to the cemetery.

S: But it was in a horse drawn hearse. (J: Oh yah) And how did everybody else get to the cemetery, in ah, horse drawn wagons?

J: Yah.

S: And were they their own, or did your father have to hire them?

J: No, no, no. The undertaker had them, he'd hire different people that had them.

S: How'd your mother react to that? She must have gone a little crazy to have a child die.

J: Well, as for much that I can remember, yah, she was. I was only maybe four at that time. Do I don't remember too much. I do remember he was layed out in white, with a white [casket].

S: Did that scare you?

J: No. Well I don't know, but I knew (S: What it meant) what being scared was at that time.

S: Yah, yah.

J: That's about it I guess, I don't know.

S: So he was buried in Clinton?

J: In Clinton, yah.

S: Oh, did you go to a Catholic school in Clinton?

J: I went to public school. Then they opened a Catholic school, church, and then I went there from the sixth grade to the eighth grade (S: umhm). Then I went to Clinton High School for one year.

S: What was the difference between the Catholic school verses say the public school? Any?

J: Well we had a lot more work we had to do. Half a day of Polish, half a day of English.

S: Oh, it was a special Polish...

J: Yes, that's right.

S: Catholic School, oh...

J: One from the parish, it was a Polish parish. So we had half a day of Polish, and half a day of English.

S: Ah!.

J: And talk about biligual here, you know, what they think, they want everything on the platter.

S: Right!

J: Our parents couldn't speak or (unclear) the language. There was nobody to teach us. (S: Yah) We had to pick it up on our own.

S: Hm.

J: We didn't die! But today every politician, they want to give everybody everything!

S: Did you have a hard time in school because of that?

J: It wasn't easy. It wasn't easy. (Giggles)

S: Why, did the other kids take advantage of you, because you didn't know English as well?

J: No. I don't remember anything of that nature, you know.

S: It's just that you couldn't understand somethings.

J: Well some yah, but you caught on pretty quick.

S: Yah.

J: Yah, if you wanted to get by you made a ...

S: Effort

J: You found out how to do it.

S: Hum.

J: You would.

S: So then you went to Clinton High School for one year?

J: For one year.

S: But you didn't have to have the Polish anymore?

J: Oh, no, no, no.

S: Yah.

J: No, we had just ah, regular.

S: Did you ever go back and try and finish up high school, or was it just too hard with work and all?

J: No, I never went back to try and finish up high school, but I did go back to take College courses.

S: Yah!

J: I took courses in Criminology.

S: Yah.

J: At University of Lowell.

S: Umhm.

J: And ah, I took criminology at North Eastern, from North Eastern, which we had at the prison.

S: Umhm. Now which prison was this that you worked at?

J: The State Prison, Charlestown, Walpole.

S: [Unclear]. So you've lived in Lowell all this time that you were working there?

J: Right, hm.

S: When you went to school, did you bring your lunch to school, or you came home for lunch?

J: No, when we were going to grade school, we came home for noon.

S: Right.

J: And then we went back.

S: Oh.

J: Twelve o'clock classes ended. (S: Umhm) that was the noon class. We went home. One o'clock we had classes again. [Unclear] two o'clock, three-thirty. That was public and parochial schools. And the high school, no you didn't come back. You might take a lunch, or just waited till it was over, till school ended.

S: Hm. So did you send your children to Catholic Schools?

J: Yah. He went, my son went to the Holy, the St. Stanislaus School on High Street. And he went to ah, Watkins Glenn, New York. (S: Oh) That was a parochial high school there. Are you familiar with Watkins Glenn?

S: Ya, well...

J: Are you?

S: Ya, I lived in New York State, up in Syracuse.

J: Well he went four years to St. Anthony of [unclear].

S: Umhm.

J: That was on a hill in Watkins Glenn. In fact, they use to hold the Grand Prix races in Watkins Glenn. It wasn't far from the school where he went.

S: Hm.

J: Then he went to, when he got out of there, Mt. Wachusett Junior High in [unclear], for two years. Then he went to...which is now Boston State.

S: Umhm.

J: That's where he got his Masters in Liberal Arts. He went to University of Lowell got his Masters in Education. In the meantime, he went to Worcester State and took Driver Ed courses, got a degree in that, then a Supervisors Course in Worcester State. He's teaching at Lowell High. He's in the Driver Ed Program at Lowell High.

S: Hm. And what do you think has changed about Lowell? A lot of building, or attitudes?

J: Both! Oh building of course, sure, definitely, definitely! Well, look it, right where the Wang Tower is down here now, cultural center, whatever it is...

S: Umhm.

J: That's where the Dancause Rex Hall used to be there. They use to have bowling alleys there, and they use to have a big dance room there. They used to hold banquets there. They used to have a catering business.

S: Oh speaking of catering, when you were married, can you tell me about ah, what the ceremony was like, and what you did? Like did you have a big crowd in?

J: Oh yah, we had our wedding reception on Bridge Street. There was a hall there. [Name of hall unclear] I think it was.

S: This was in 1940?

J: 1940.

S: Ya.

J: In ah, my mother and friends, (S: umhm) they made the meal.

S: Oh, they did! (J: Yah) You didn't hire anybody?

J: No. And they had stuff to drink, which somebody made, you know. (S: umhm) And there might of been maybe two, three hundred people there. They were like sardines, but they were there. (Both laughing)

S: Really!

J: Yah.

S: Now what was the tradition at a Polish wedding? Um, did you give money, or gifts?

J: Money, money. Very seldom... the Polish custom was you give them money, because then they get what they want, you know, (S: Yah) or do what they want with it. Although later on maybe, somebody use to buy gifts, but if you're going to a Polish wedding, strictly, you know, it's...Even today, if I went to a wedding I'd give money, because that's the way I was brought up.

S: What do you do, you hand it to the...?

J: They had what they called the wedding march, you know. The couple and the wedding party would get up, walk around the hall while the orchestra is playing the wedding march.

S: Umhm.

J: And ah, then when they started, everybody in the family went, then everybody else went in the back of them, you know.

S: Umhm.

J: They marched around the hall, then went in back of the table, where the head table, the wedding party's table. And there was a plate there. Everybody came up. They kissed the bride, wished them good luck, and whatever they wanted in the envelope, you know. (S: Oh)

J: And the orchestra kept playing until everybody got through the line, the reception line. That's what they called it then.

S: Yah.

J: The reception line, but they played the wedding march.

S: So you must have done okay for ... of course this was during ...

J: Oh, at that time you know, you got five or ten dollars. If you got ten dollars, that would be an awful lot of money from anybody.

S: Really. Do you remember how much you got?

J: No, I don't remember (laughs), but...

S: It must of been a decent amount?

J: Yah, it was, it was.

S: Yah.

J: Yah, but I really couldn't say how much, I don't know.

S: Yah, huh! Did you have a honeymoon, or you just stayed home?

J: Oh yah.

S: Oh you did?

J: Oh yah.

S: Where did you go?

J: Well we stopped at Hartford, Connecticut, (S: umhm) and from there we went to New York, and that's when they had the first World's Fair in New York.

S: Oh! That must have been exciting, huh? (J: Yah, umhm) What do you remember about that?

J: Well, everybody use to go to the Dixie Hotel in New York, which I found out it wasn't really that great of a hotel, (Laughs) but everybody use to talk about it. It was right in Broadway, you know.

S: Umhm.

J: And from there we went to the World's Fair, and spent a week or so in New York [unclear].

S: What did you like about the World's Fair, anything special?

J: Well it was quite fascinating, because they had this World's Sphere what they call it, big round ball and it was rotating. You walk through and they had all kinds of, everything that was predicted for the future.

S: Ah, and what did they predict?

J: The things that are coming true, you know, airplanes, because at that time there wasn't many planes. (S: Yah) And new transportation systems, big buildings, you know. (S: Yah) Skyscrapers, tearing down small buildings, the cars of the future. (S: Umhm) Stuff like that. In fact the second one they had in New York I think, my son and I went, and to get inside a big exhibit, (S: umhm) you have a lines like this. It'd take you hours and hours to get in there, just to get into the exhibit. (S: Hm) I called them cow corrals, because that's just what it was, (both laugh) like that. They had them all roped off. You'd think you were getting close and you were way, a mile away yet! They had more at the

second one. They had about...The general idea was like the first one, only more advanced. They had the cities of the future, and all that.

S: Oh!

S: Oh.

J: And ah, so this is what that was all about.

S: So you stayed there for about a week, and then came back home and went to work, both of you did?

J: Umhm.

S: And how long did it take you before, when you moved out of your in-laws place, did you move into your own house, or did you rent?

J: No, we rented, but it was my mother-in-law's, my in-laws' house up the street. (S: Oh) We went in there. They had a tenement there downstairs.

S: Umhm. Did they give you a break on the rent?

J: Oh yah! Sure, in those days, well I imagine today they do too, you know, everybody's not alike! (S: Yah) You'll find some that do, and some that don't. So, it isn't any different today I don't think, than it was in those days depending on the person. There's people today do the same thing they did years ago, and there's some that won't, it's not surprising.

S: So when were you able to have your first house?

J: This is the first house.

S: First house, how long have you lived here?

J: Twenty-years.

S: It took awhile to save?

J: Oh yah. You know when you look back, the money you were making then, (S: umhm) and the money they're making today, somebody will say, "Well gee they must be loaded," because they're only looking at what they're getting today. They don't realize what little money they were making in those days.

S: Yah.

J: When I started I made like thirteen dollars a week, five dollars, like two or three dollars when I first started weaving. (S: umhm) You know? (S: umhm) And then thirteen dollars, fifteen dollars, till I was making big money when I made twenty four dollars as a loom fixer when I first started as a loom fixer. Then when I came back from the service, I was making thirty two dollars a week, and the first week I went to see the boss for a raise. I says, "well they're paying more down there." "Well how much do you want?" I says, "Well at least forty dollars." (Laughs) He gave it to me.

S: Did he really?

J: Yah. So I hit him up for a raise again awhile later, and he says, "Well if you want more money you'll have to come in at 3:00 in the morning, Sunday morning... Monday morning, 3:00, and start up the humidifiers." I says, "No. If you want to come in at 3:00, you come in. I'm not coming in at that time to start up, or to get overtime."

S: Oh. So has your wife work all through the marriage too, or did she stay...

J: Yes, most of the time.

S: How many kids did you have?

J: One, just a son.

S: Do you belong to any special clubs like through your church?

J: Well, the men's club, which we run the bingo Saturday nights. And I belong to the Polish American Veterans. I used to help them with the bingo Thursday nights, till a few years ago. (S: umhm) And ah, that's about it.

S: But a lot of people you know are through that, are through church?

J: Oh yah!

S: Stuff like that.

J: Not just Fridays and Thursdays. Saturday evening the church, pass the baskets for collections and all that.

S: Hm, well that's great then. I'll stop this.

**Interview ends
(JW)**